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## ABSTRACT

This bibliography presents, in reverse chronological order, the results of 22 articles from professional journals discussing the knowledge and attitudes found in various groups of health professionals regarding acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and patients with AIDS. This review covers a 5-year retrospective search of the literature. The findings of most of the studies are that AIDS patients are feared by many health professionals, including those with many years of education, such as physicians and medical school faculty. Every article cited calls for more education--entry-level and continuing. Some call for education that is primarily attitudinal/affective; some for knowledge-based education; most call for more of both types of education. (KC)

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AIDS KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## Introduction

This bibliography presents, in basically reverse chronologic order, the results of 22 articles from professional journals discussing the knowledge and attitudes found in various groups of health professionals regarding AIDS, HIV, and patients with AIDS. This review covers a 5 year retrospective search of the literature.

These articles are remarkably consistent in their findings, though there are also some interesting conflicting reports. AIDS patients are feared by many health professionals, including those with many years of education such as physicians and medical school faculty. Every article cited calls for more education - entry level and continuing. Some call for education that is primarily attitudinal/affective; some for knowledge-based education; most call for more of both.

Damrosch S, Abbey S, Warner A et.al.: Critical care nurses attitudes toward, concerns about, and knowledge of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Heart Lung 1990; 19: 395-400.

The authors surveyed two groups of critical care nurses - one group from a secular teaching hospital, the other from a religious affiliated community hospital (n of 42 and 48, respectively). Knowledge of AIDS was high in both groups, and nurses from the teaching hospital had significantly more favorable attitudes towards AIDS patients.

Currey CJ, Johnson M, Ogden B: Willingness of health professions students to treat patients with AIDS. Academic Med 1990; 65: 472-474.

319 students in a medical, dental, nursing, physician assistant, or physical therapy program were surveyed to explore their attitudes towards AIDS patients and whether these attitudes affected their willingness to engage in the care of AIDS patients. Students as a group were very afraid of infection and perceived themselves to be at increased risk in working with AIDS patients. Written comments indicated that much of the ambivalence was due to skepticism at both classroom presentation of AIDS material as well as media reports of AIDS. It was felt that the curriculum needed to be strengthened both in terms of factual knowledge and ethical/human value concerns to allay fears and modify attitudes.

Ficarrotto TJ, Grade M, Bliwise N, et.al.: Predictors of medical and nursing students' levels of HIV-AIDS knowledge and their resistance to working with AIDS patients. Academic Med 1990; 65: 470-471.

Using a professional resistance scale, an AIDS knowledge scale, and a risk perception scale, the authors surveyed 113 incoming medical students and 118 incoming nursing students. It was determined that exaggerated risk estimates were associated both with low HIV-AIDS knowledge and a greater resistance to working with AIDS patients. It was suggested that three different approaches would be of value in training health professionals regarding HIV-AIDS: (1). Programs must provide accurate information about risk; (2). The emotional reactions of health care workers to HIV-AIDS must be addressed; and (3). There needs to be a greater sensitivity to and familiarity with the groups at highest risk.

Tesch BJ, Simpson DE, Kirby BD: Medical and nursing students attitudes about AIDS issues. Academic Med 1990; 65: 467-469.

445 medical students, 133 medical school applicants, and 111 nursing students were surveyed regarding both knowledge of and attitude towards AIDS. The more knowledgeable the student, the less likely this same individual was to refuse treatment to AIDS patients or require a mandatory AIDS testing of physicians. Fear of AIDS was seen as being significantly lower in students with high knowledge of AIDS.

Feldman TB, Bell RA, Stephenson JJ, et.al.: Attitudes of medical school faculty and students toward acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Academic Med 1990; 65: 464-466.

Both the 170 faculty and the 227 students surveyed showed a strong fear of AIDS infection, possessed strong negative attitudes towards AIDS patients, and showed a low level of confidence in current knowledge of AIDS. It was felt that the disease needed to be "personalized" to offset the current stigmatization of AIDS patients, as well as effective knowledge-based training.

Bernstein CA, Rabkin JB, Volland H: Medical and dental students attitudes about the AIDS epidemic. Academic Med 1990; 65: 458-460.

This study looked at changes in attitudes in a year of

clinical training among medical and dental students. Whereas medical students became more liberal after working with AIDS patients, dental students became more conservative or fearful in their attitudes. Over two-thirds of the dental students and one-third of the medical students felt that they were not responsible for working with AIDS patients. As the clinical year was not exceptionally effective, the authors suggest that additional AIDS training is needed in both groups.

Vincent TA, Schkade JK: Knowledge and attitudes of occupational therapy students regarding AIDS. Am J Occup Ther 1990; 44: 205-210.

The authors found no difference in knowledge between 36 occupational therapy students and 33 education students. However, it was found that occupational therapy students were more positive on two of the attitudes scales (quarantining AIDS patients and the right to refuse an AIDS patient). There needs to be, according to the authors, an increased emphasis on AIDS in the occupational therapy curriculum to increase the knowledge of future practitioners.

Atchison BJ, Beard BJ, Lester LB: Occupational therapy personnel and AIDS: Attitudes, knowledge, and fears. Am J Occup Ther 1990; 44: 212-217.

119 occupational therapists and assistants were found to have significant fear of AIDS. A substantial minority (45%) reported the media as their sole source of information regarding AIDS. It is concluded that a large scale effort in occupational therapy is needed to inform, and continually update the professional regarding AIDS.

Prince NA, Beard BJ, Ivey SL, et.al.: Perinatal nurses knowledge and attitudes about AIDS. JOGNN 1989; 5: 363-369.

Of 134 nurses, more than 85% expressed a fear of AIDS in this survey. Also, many nurses had incorrect information regarding perinatal AIDS. Most had a good general knowledge of AIDS, indicating that there needs to be more specific information geared to each profession in AIDS presentations.

Merrill JM, Laux L, Thornby JI: AIDS and student attitudes. Southern Med J 1989; 82: 426-432.

Three vignettes were presented to medical students to assess their attitudes towards AIDS patients. Study 1 found that student views of illness are the same whether the patient was represented with an AIDS or leukemia patient. The second study found that sexual preference was not the main reason that students would avoid an AIDS patient, though females were found to score better on measures of homophobia than males. Study 3 confirmed that fear of contagion was the main reason medical students would prefer to not care for AIDS patients.

Cassells JM, Redman BK: New baccalaureate graduates in care of AIDS patients: Perceptions of preparedness and information accessibility. J Con Educ Nurs 1988; 20: 156-161.

The results of this large national survey indicated that:

- (1). Nursing schools are currently building curricula to prepare practitioners to care for AIDS patients;
- (2). Nurses show moderate feelings of preparedness to care for AIDS patients;
- (3). Those with clinical experience are more comfortable in caring for AIDS patients; and
- (4). Nurses feel that the information currently available to them is "modest", and show only moderate trust in the information available.

Haughey BP, Scherer YK, Wu YVB: Nurses knowledge about AIDS in Erie County, New York: A research brief. J Con Educ Nurs 1988; 20: 166-168.

581 nurses responded to this mail survey, and it was found that the mean score on an index of knowledge was slightly less than 70%. Nurses that had cared for AIDS patients had a significantly higher knowledge than those that had not. Also, only 51% of the nurses surveyed indicated that continuing education on AIDS was available to them at their institution. This documents the need, at least in this area according to the authors, for additional continuing education opportunities in AIDS.

Link RN, Feingold AR, Charap MH et.al.: Concerns of medical and pediatric house officers about acquiring AIDS from their patients. AJPH 1988; 78: 455-459.

Forty-eight percent of medical and 30 percent of pediatric house officers reported a moderate to major concern of acquiring AIDS from their patients (n of 126 and 124, respectively). Thirty-six percent of the medical and 17 percent of the pediatric house officers reported needlestick injuries sustained from AIDS patients. Those early in their residency training, those who reported having treated a greater number of AIDS patients, and those who were in the medical program all reported greater fear of personal risk. If possible, 25 percent indicated that they would not care for AIDS patients. It is concluded that these problems are serious and need to be addressed by program administrators.

Lester LB, Beard BJ: Nursing students attitudes toward AIDS. J Nurs Educ 1988; 27: 299-404.

This study of 177 baccalaureate nursing students showed that students with a high fear score were less willing to care for the AIDS patient, were more homophobic, and in contrast to many of the other studies seen here, had higher knowledge scores. 49% preferred not to care for AIDS patients, though almost all (96.6%) felt that AIDS patients deserved the same standard of care as other patients. Thirty-six percent of students felt that nursing students should not have to care for AIDS patients. As in many of the other studies, most (70.6%) of the students received their information from the media.

Kelley JA, St. Lawrence JS, Hood HV, et.al.: Nurses attitudes toward AIDS. J Con Educ Nurs 1988; 19: 78-83.

In a sample of 161 nurses, the authors found "disquieting" stigmatization of AIDS patients among nurses. Whereas the study of Merrill and colleagues showed that medical students did not stigmatize AIDS patients as compared to a patient with leukemia, the nurses studied here did. Even social interaction with no chance of infection were seen as distasteful to many of the nurses in this study.

Andre BC: AIDS, attitudes and infection control. Am J Inf Control 1988; 16: 272-273.

This survey of 42 registered nurses pre-registered for an AIDS inservice program showed that 67% had a fear of contagion from AIDS patients. 54% had worked with an AIDS patient, and 57% indicated that they would wait for a protective airway device to perform CPR, whereas 36% indicated that they would not perform CPR at all. 33% would not care for a patient with AIDS.

Stanford J: Knowledge and attitudes to AIDS. Nursing Times 1988; 84 (24): 47-50.

This British study found generally poor knowledge of AIDS among nurses, with those questions related to legal issues and nursing care answered "particularly badly". Of the 170 nurses studied, having worked with an AIDS patient did not improve knowledge. However, mostly positive attitudes were found, and the author concluded that much more education of nurses was needed.

Searle ES: Knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of health professionals in relation to AIDS. Lancet 1987; January 3: 26-28.

750 nurses, dentists, and physicians were studied in this British survey. 38% did not know the true meaning of an antibody test, and 30% of nurses and 42% of dentists preferred that HIV patients be cared for in "special units". However, only 18% of surgeons and consultants felt that this was necessary, whereas 92% of GU physicians felt that current safety procedures were adequate.

Kelly JA, St. Lawrence JS, Smith S, et.al.: Medical students attitudes toward AIDS and homosexual patients. J Med Educ 1987; 62: 549-556.

This study of 119 medical students found that in analysis of patient vignettes, students held significantly prejudiced and negative attitudes towards both AIDS and homosexual patients. Students held negative attitudes towards homosexual patients regardless of illness. Again, increased awareness and sensitivity are called for by the authors.

Kelly JA, St. Lawrence JS, Smith S, et.al.: Stigmatization of AIDS patients by physicians. AJPH 1987; 77: 789-791.

Again, using patient vignettes, this time with graduate physicians, Kelly and colleagues found "harsh attitude judgements" associated with AIDS portrayals. Also physicians indicated, as the study of nurses mentioned earlier performed by Kelly and colleagues, that they were unwilling even to engage in casual conversation with an AIDS patient. For example, on a 7-point Likert scale, a 95% coefficient of difference was found in willingness to: engage in conversation, attend party, work in the same office, continue friendship, renew lease, and allow children to visit between AIDS and leukemia patients.

Vertz DC, Sorenson JR, Liebling L, et.al.: Knowledge and attitudes of AIDS health care providers before education programs. Public Health Rep 1987; 102: 248-254.

Significant improvements were seen following an educational intervention in accuracy of knowledge about 7 of 15 modes of transmission and 7 of 11 means of infection control were seen in a survey sample of 1,247 healthcare providers. All types of providers were studied: 49% were registered nurses, and 12% fell into the catchall "support staff" group, which usually includes allied health professionals. Attitudes also shifted significantly on 6 of 9 attitude questions. A 1 month followup of 159 of the participants showed good retention of knowledge.

Valenti VM, Anarella JP: Survey of hospital personnel of their understanding of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Am J Inf Control 1986; 14: 60-63.

266 hospital workers were surveyed (including physicians). A positive correlation was found between score on the knowledge test and level of education. "Support personnel" (which includes allied health personnel) had the lowest level of knowledge of AIDS. However the data may be skewed as many non health care educated personnel (such as patient transportation and equipment center employees) were included. Isolation procedures were the most often missed questions by all groups.